



# **Sexual Behavior Health Risks Among Rhode Island Public High School Students 1997 through 2005**

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is an anonymous and voluntary survey among random samples of high school students in over 50 states, territories, and municipalities nationwide. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention developed the YRBS to monitor risk behaviors for the major causes of mortality, disease, injury, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. In the spring of 1997, 2001, 2003 and 2005, Rhode Island (RI) administered the YRBS to 1,528, 1,392, 1,814 and 2,362 adolescents, with response rates of 60%, 63%, 66%, and 71% respectively. Weighted findings are representative of 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade public high school students statewide and can be used to make important inferences concerning health-risk behaviors. The RI Departments of Health, Education, and Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals provide funding and other support for the YRBS.

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## ***KEY FINDINGS***

### ***Lifetime and Recent Sexual Intercourse, Multiple Partners, and Age at First Sexual Intercourse***

Nearly half of RI high school students in 2005 had ever had sexual intercourse, little changed from previous surveys. From 1997 to 2005, males consistently appeared slightly more likely than females to have ever had sex. In 2005, the lifetime rate increased steadily by grade level from 31% for 9<sup>th</sup> graders to 67% for 12<sup>th</sup> graders. The percentage of males who had recent sexual intercourse (past 3 months) increased significantly from 28% to 37% between 1997 and 2005, while the proportion for females remained stable at about one third. The percentage of students who had recent sex increased markedly across grade levels in 2005, from 23% for 9<sup>th</sup> graders to 58% for 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

The percentage of students having sexual intercourse with four or more people during their lifetime was stable between 11% and 14% across the surveys. In 2005, nearly twice the percentage of males (17%) than females (9%) had had multiple sexual partners. Older students in 2005, especially 12<sup>th</sup> graders (21%), seemed much more likely than younger students to have had multiple sexual partners. In each survey year, 6% to 7% of students reported having sexual intercourse for the first time before age 13. The rates for early sexual experience were 2 to 4 times higher for males than females over the survey periods, with a significant downward trend noted for females. In 2005, 9<sup>th</sup> graders (9%) appeared about twice as likely than students in higher grades to have had sex before age 13.

### ***Use of Condoms and Birth Control Pills, Alcohol and Other Drug Use Related to Sexual Intercourse***

From 1997 to 2005, there was a significant increase from 52% to 66% in the rate of sexually active students who used a condom at last intercourse, especially among males (56% to 73%). However, twelfth graders (58%) appeared somewhat less likely than younger students to have used condoms in 2005. The percentage of sexually active students using birth control pills remained fairly stable over time between 17% and 22%, but the rate was consistently higher among females than males (23% versus 17% in 2005). The use of birth control pills increased steadily by grade from 8% for 9<sup>th</sup> graders to 27% for 12<sup>th</sup> graders in 2005.

The rate among all students for drinking alcohol or using drugs before last sexual intercourse declined significantly from 32% to 22% between 1997 and 2005, largely due to a significant decrease among males from 42% to 28%. In each survey year, males were substantially more likely than females to use alcohol or drugs before sex (28% versus 16% in 2005). There were no major differences observed by grade level in 2005.

### ***HIV/AIDS Education in School***

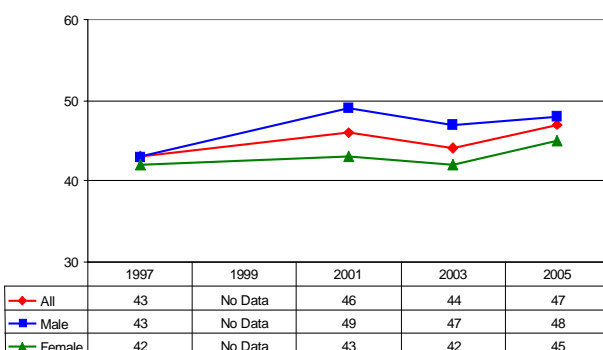
There was a significant decline from 95% in 1997 to 87% in 2005 in the proportion of students who had ever been taught about AIDS or HIV infection in school. Significant decreases occurred for both males and females, although girls seemed consistently more likely to report AIDS or HIV education than boys, especially in 2005 (91% versus 85%). As one might expect, rates appeared to increase slightly but steadily across grade levels in 2005.

## Sexual Behavior

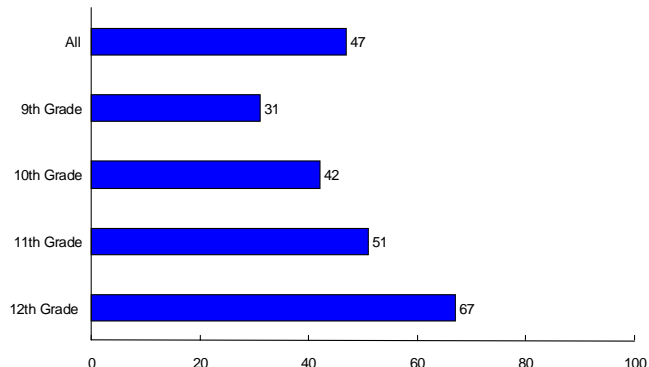
### **Risk Behavior:** Lifetime & Recent Sexual Intercourse, Multiple Partners, & Age at First Sexual Intercourse

**Rationale:** Recent sexual behavior and number of sexual partners is associated with increased risk for unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection. Early initiation of sexual intercourse is associated with having a greater number of lifetime partners. In addition, adolescents who initiate sexual intercourse early are less likely to use contraception and are at higher risk for pregnancy.

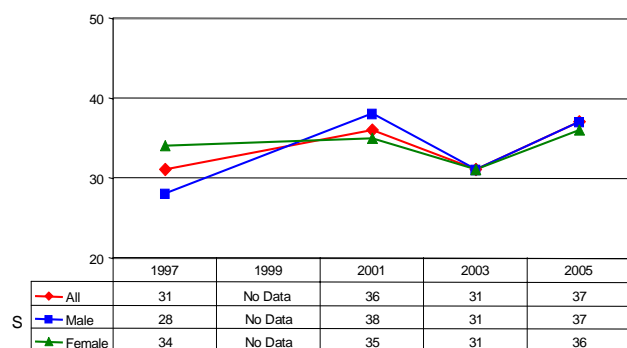
**Percentage of RI high school students who ever had sexual intercourse - YRBS**



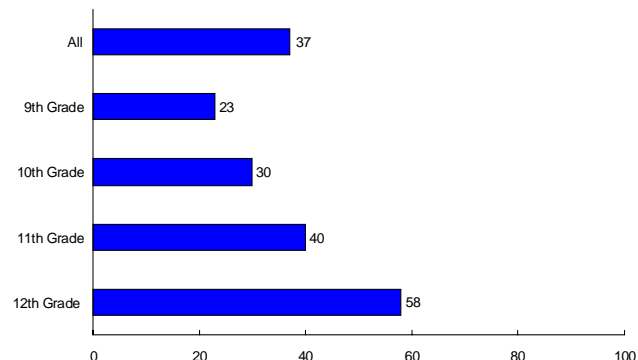
**Percentage of RI high school students who ever had sexual intercourse - 2005 YRBS**



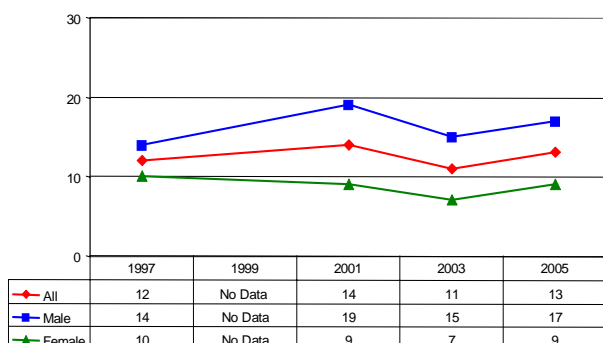
**Percentage of RI high school students who had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months - YRBS**



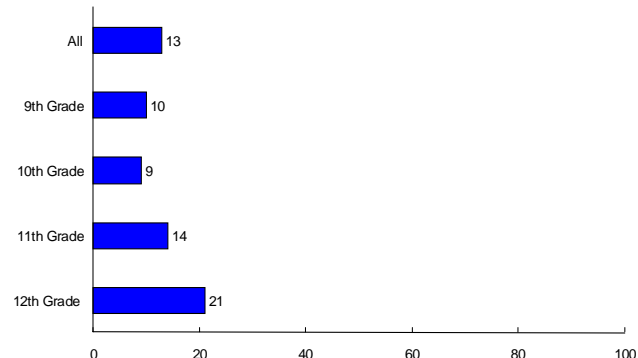
**Percentage of RI high school students who had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months - 2005 YRBS**



**Percentage of RI high school students who had sexual intercourse with 4 or more people during their lifetime - YRBS**



**Percentage of RI high school students who had sexual intercourse with 4 or more people during their lifetime - 2005 YRBS**



Note: An "S" next to the line graph legend box denotes a statistically significant linear change.

Source: 1997 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey (n=1528)

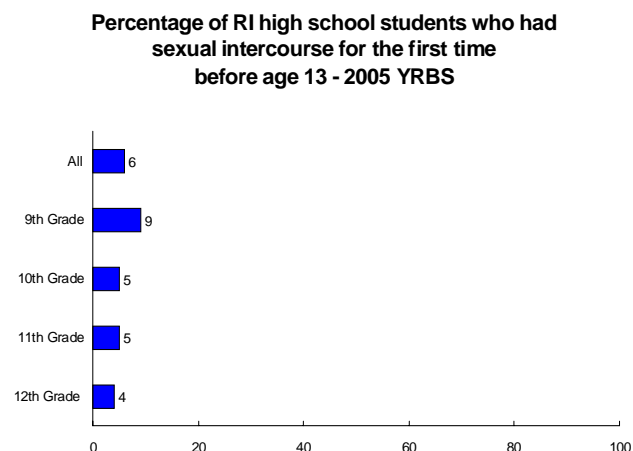
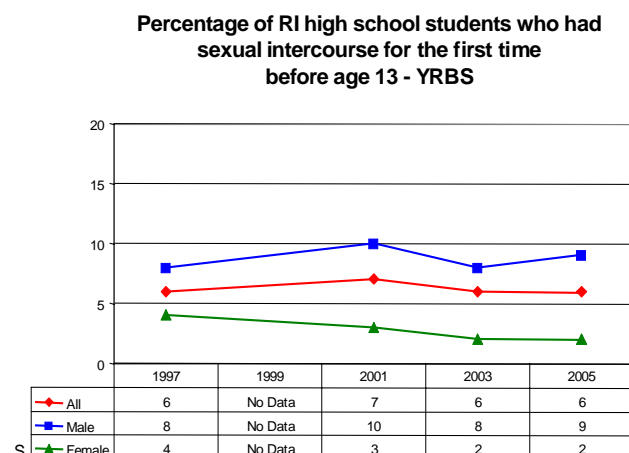
2003 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey (n=1814)

2001 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey (n=1392)

2005 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey (n=2362)

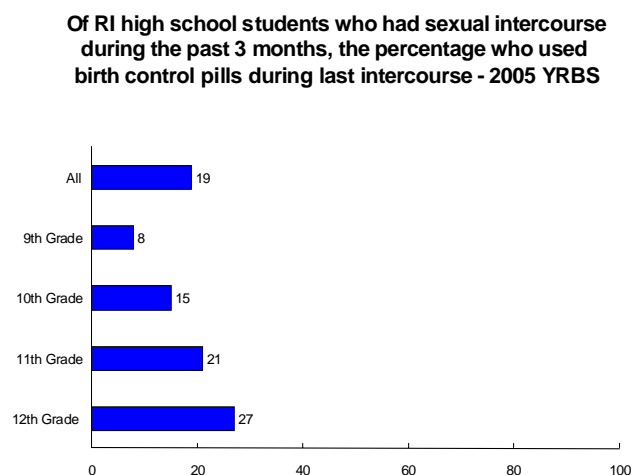
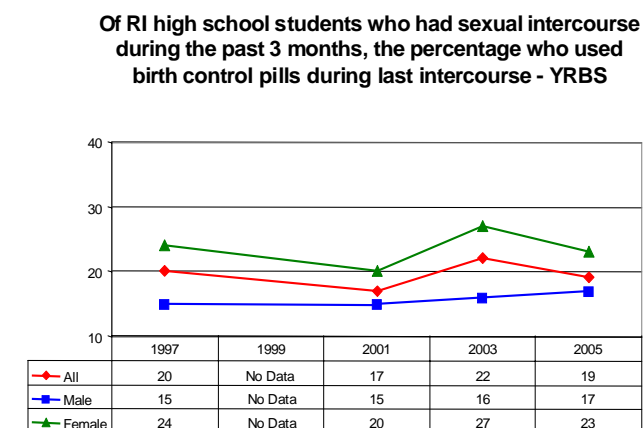
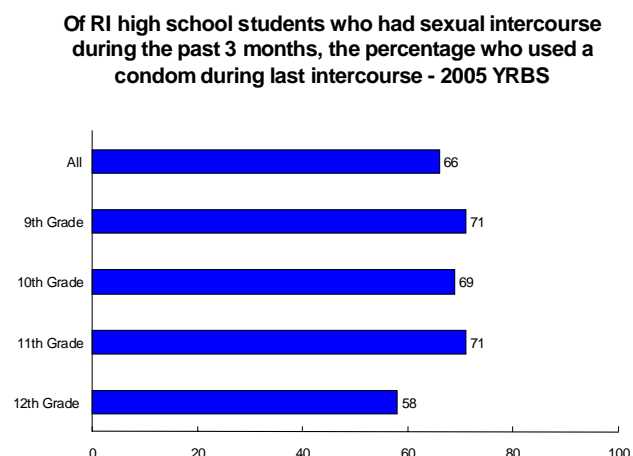
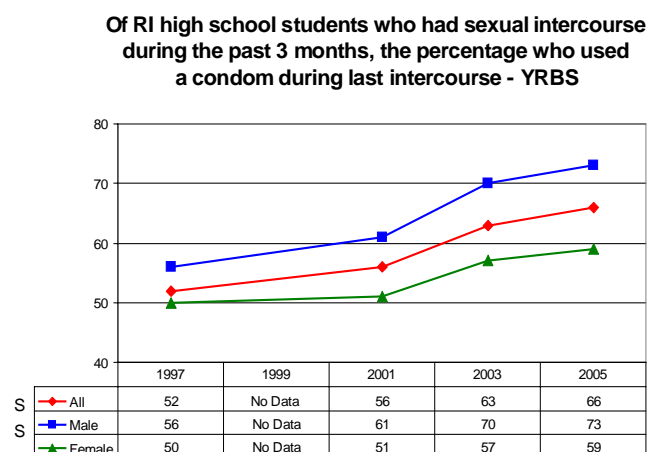
## Sexual Behavior

### *Risk Behavior:* Lifetime & Recent Sexual Intercourse, Multiple Partners, & Age at First Sexual Intercourse (Continued)



### *Risk Behavior:* Use of Condoms & Birth Control Pills, Alcohol & Other Drug Use Related to Sexual Intercourse

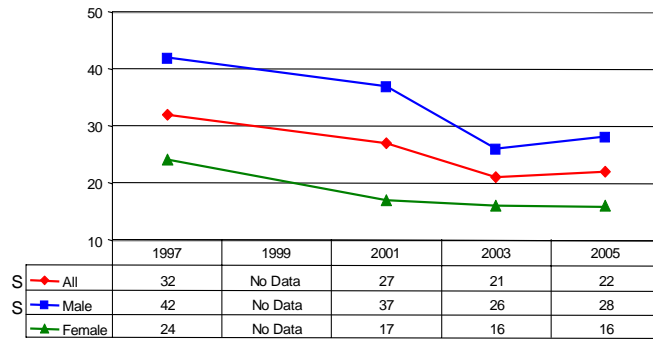
**Rationale:** Each year in the United States, there are an estimated 9.1 million cases of sexually transmitted diseases among persons aged 15-24 years. Alcohol and other drug use may serve as predisposing factors for initiation of sexual activity and unprotected sexual intercourse. Use of latex condoms by males, when used consistently and correctly, are highly effective at reducing the risk of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases.



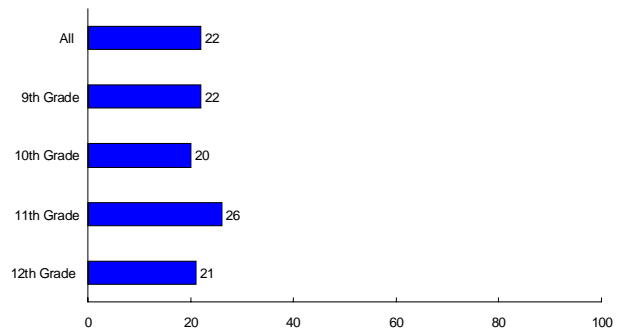
## Sexual Behavior

**Risk Behavior:** Use of Condoms & Birth Control Pills, Alcohol & Other Drug Use Related to Sexual Intercourse (Continued)

Of RI high school students who had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months, the percentage who drank alcohol or used drugs before last intercourse - YRBS



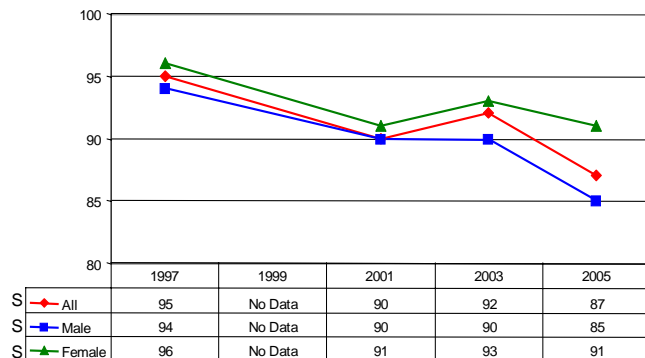
Of RI high school students who had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months, the percentage who drank alcohol or used drugs before last intercourse - 2005 YRBS



**Risk Behavior:** HIV/AIDS Education in School

**Rationale:** In 2004, there were an estimated 4,842 cases of HIV/AIDS among persons aged 15-24 years in the United States. Nearly three quarters of senior high schools nationwide taught HIV prevention in a required health education course.

Percentage of RI high school students who had ever been taught in school about AIDS or HIV infection - YRBS



Percentage of RI high school students who had ever been taught in school about AIDS or HIV infection - 2005 YRBS

